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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8921
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1932
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 5410
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 9003
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6579
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 4398
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2387
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 RANGOON 000254

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA: NLD UNITED ON NEED FOR DIALOGUE; READY TO
COMPROMISE; DIVIDED ON LEADERSHIP

REF: A. RANGOON 226

[1](#)B. RANGOON 244

Classified By: Political Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) At the conclusion of the National League for Democracy's (NLD) two-day national meeting on April 28 and 29, delegates overwhelmingly approved a declaration stating the party will consider participating in the 2010 elections provided the regime releases all political prisoners, reviews and amends the constitution, and holds a free and fair election under international supervision. Later, NLD Central Executive Committee (CEC) member Khin Maung Swe stressed to us the party's willingness to engage in dialogue with the regime and suggested the party made a significant concession in dropping its demand to convene the 1990 parliament. Meanwhile, an MP-elect who signed an open letter calling for CEC Chair Aung Shwe to resign said most of the approximately 30 signatories agree with the CEC on the substance of the declaration, but disapprove of Aung Shwe's leadership style. End Summary.

NLD's National Meeting Unhindered

[1](#)2. (C) The NLD convened a national meeting at its headquarters April 28-29 to discuss and decide upon the party's strategy and policy in the run-up to the 2010 elections. Invitees included representatives from each of Burma's 14 states and divisions as well all NLD MPs-elect in country and various women and youth NLD members (Ref A). Charge, P/E Chief, and other members of the diplomatic corps attended the opening session on April 28. At the conclusion of the meeting, NLD delegates overwhelmingly approved a declaration (labeled the Shwegondaing Declaration, after the location of the party's national headquarters) stating the party will consider participating in the 2010 elections provided the regime releases all political prisoners, reviews and amends the constitution, and holds a free and fair election under international supervision.

[1](#)3. (C) In a May 4 meeting with Charge, NLD CEC member Khin

Maung Swe and prominent NLD MP-elect Than Nyein reported that Burmese authorities had made no attempt to disrupt the meeting and had not prevented any NLD members from traveling to attend. They added that Rakhine State NLD representatives had even been encouraged by local GOB officials to attend, and that authorities had promised to help prevent any disruptions outside party headquarters. (Note: on April 28, a slew of camera-toting security officials passively observed the event from across the street. End Note).

NLD United on Dialogue; Seeks U.S. Assistance

¶4. (C) Khin Maung Swe and Than Nyein described the NLD declaration as conciliatory, noting that the party made a significant concession in dropping its long-standing demand to convene the 1990 parliament. Khin Maung Swe said that the three "conditions" for the NLD's participation in the election are all reasonable and stressed that the declaration is intended to signal the NLD's willingness to engage in dialogue with the regime to resolve all important issues. He held open the possibility that ASSK, during dialogue, would be willing to make additional concessions, including even on provisions providing for mandatory military representation in parliament. Admitting that the party does not have direct lines to the regime, Khin Maung Swe asked the Charge to convey the party's openness to dialogue to GOB officials. The Charge, noting that the degree of NLD flexibility described by Khin Maung Swe is not apparent in the English-language version of the declaration, gave assurance

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that the U.S. has repeatedly urged the regime to engage in dialogue with the NLD, and Embassy Rangoon will convey the NLD's message to regime senior officials at the next appropriate occasion.

Internal Dynamics

¶5. (C) When Than Nyein was asked about the process of developing and reaching consensus on the declaration, he said there was a lively debate within the CEC, including over whether to drop the convocation of the 1990 parliament as a condition to participate in 2010. He said that, in the end, the CEC finally concluded that the 1990 battle is lost. He admitted surprise at how little delegates debated at the broader meeting, estimating that close to 90 percent of the delegates voted to approve the proposal without discussion. The near unanimity of opinion on the substance of the declaration extended even to those NLD members who had publicly called for the resignation of party Chairman U Aung Shwe and Joint Secretary U Lwin (Ref B). Bago MP-elect Nyan Hla, who signed the April 29 letter calling for the resignations, said most of the approximately 30 signatories agree with the CEC on the substance of the declaration and voted in favor of the CEC's proposals.

Divided on Leadership...

¶6. (C) Nyan Hla told us the NLD needs stronger leadership to accomplish its objectives. He said he and his fellow signatories have a great deal of respect for CEC members Win Tin and Khin Maung Swe (both of whom were released from prison in September 2008), but view Chair Aung Shwe and Joint Secretary U Lwin as dictatorial in their control of the party. He expressed disappointment with the lack of progress under Aung Shwe's leadership. The idea to write the letter calling for the resignations was not planned far in advance, Nyan Hla told us; instead a couple of the signatories informally broached the idea at a preliminary delegate meeting on April 27. Nyan Hla was vague when asked how the drafters of the letter obtained the support of others, including approximately 15 rank-and-file members, saying only that they circulated the idea and recruited supporters by

word of mouth before and during the meeting.

¶7. (C) In the meeting with the Charge, CEC member Khin Maung Swe was extremely critical of the letter, calling it "ridiculous." MP-elect Than Nyein was more charitable, telling Charge he can understand how some NLD members are not satisfied with the party's leadership, but he believes the timing of the letter was "unfortunate" given the seriousness of the issues at stake. Other rank-and-file NLD members expressed similar sentiments. Prominent HIV/AIDS activist and NLD member Phyu Phyu Thin told us she was surprised to learn of the letter and said she and her colleagues thought the party's national meeting was not an appropriate forum to publicly air differences over internal party politics. She acknowledged that Aung Shwe and many of the other Uncles have failed to make significant progress on the party's objectives, but stressed they have maintained the NLD's status as a legal political party, an important goal that she believes many others - including the letter's signatories - would not be able to achieve.

Election Plans

¶8. (C) When asked, the NLD officials said they intend to wait for the regime's new election and political parties' laws before making a judgment about participating politically in ¶2010. They acknowledged rumors that the new laws will say any parties that do not run candidates will be de-registered (a long-time NLD fear). They mentioned other rumors that the

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new laws will impose a prohibitively high filing fee for candidates, maybe as much as Kyat 1.1 million (about USD 1,100) per seat, which would make it impossible for the NLD to field candidates country-wide.

Comment

¶9. (C) The NLD's decision to drop the convening of the 1990 parliament as a precondition to participation in 2010 was apparently intended to be a significant signal, and was the basis for Khin Maung Swe's description of the Shwegondaing Declaration as "conciliatory." The rest of the statement reads as a list of firm demands that the regime has repeatedly ignored. We will gladly pass along to the regime the NLD's emphasis that the intent is to engender dialogue on the range of issues with everything on the table and with a willingness to compromise in hopes of bringing Burma a stable, prosperous future. We are not hopeful, though, that the regime will alter its course.
DINGER